

software to perform the functions recited above. In this respect, it should be appreciated that one implementation of the present invention comprises at least one computer readable medium (e.g., a computer memory, a floppy disk, a compact disk, a tape, etc.) encoded with a program that, when executed on a processor, performs the above-
5 discussed functions of the present invention. The computer readable medium can be transportable such that the program stored thereon can be loaded onto any computer system resource to implement the aspects of the present invention discussed above. In addition, it should be appreciated that the reference to a computer program that, when executed, performs the above-discussed functions is not limited to an application
10 program running on application space on any computer. Rather, the term computer program is used here in a generic sense to reference any type of computer code (e.g., software or microcode) that can be employed to program a processor to implement the above-discussed aspects of the present invention.

Having discussed several embodiments of the invention in detail, various
15 modifications and improvements will readily occur to those skilled in the art. Such modifications and improvements intended to be with the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the foregoing description is by way of example only, and is not intended as limiting. The invention is limited as only as defined by the following claims and the equivalents thereto.

20 What is claimed is:

1. A method for automatically launching a software application on a first computer, the first computer being coupled to a second computer, the method comprising acts of:

5 (A) receiving a link request at the first computer from the second computer, the link request identifying the software application, the link request further identifying a second user on the second computer and requesting that a first user on the first computer link with the second user to form a linked multi-user group that shares the software application; and

10 (B) responsive to the first user accepting the link request, automatically launching the software application on the first computer.

2. The method of claim 1, further including an act of accepting the link request, and wherein the acts of accepting the link request and automatically launching the software application are both performed in response to a same single action by the first user.

15 3. The method of claim 1, further including an act of accepting the link request to form the linked multi-user group with the first and second users sharing the software application.

20 4. The method of claim 1, further including an act of, prior to the act of launching the software application, automatically performing a check to ensure that the first and second computers have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon.

25 5. The method of claim 4, further including an act of, when it is determined that the first and second computers do not have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon, automatically installing a new version of the software application on at least one of the first and second computers.

30 6. A computer readable medium encoded with a computer program that, when executed on at least one computer, performs a method for automatically launching a software application on a first computer, the first computer being coupled to a second computer, the method comprising acts of:

(A) receiving a link request at the first computer from the second computer, the link request identifying the software application, the link request further identifying a second user on the second computer and requesting that a first user on the first computer link with the second user to form a linked multi-user group that shares the software application; and

5 (B) responsive to the first user accepting the link request, automatically launching the software application on the first computer.

7. The computer readable medium of claim 6, wherein the method further includes
10 an act of accepting the link request, and wherein the acts of accepting the link request and automatically launching the software application are both performed in response to a same single action by the first user.

8. The computer readable medium of claim 6, wherein the method further includes
15 an act of accepting the link request to form the linked multi-user group with the first and second users sharing the software application.

9. The computer readable medium of claim 6, wherein the method further includes
20 an act of, prior to the act of launching the software application, automatically performing a check to ensure that the first and second computers have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon.

10. The computer readable medium of claim 9, wherein the method further includes
an act of, when it is determined that the first and second computers do not have
25 compatible versions of the software application installed thereon, automatically installing a new version of the software application on at least one of the first and second computers.

11. A first computer for use in a computer system that includes the first computer and
30 a second computer coupled to the first computer, the first computer comprising:
at least one controller to receive a link request at the first computer from the second computer, the link request identifying a software application, the link request

further identifying a second user on the second computer and requesting that a first user on the first computer link with the second user to form a linked multi-user group that shares the software application, wherein the at least one controller is responsive to the first user accepting the link request to automatically launch the software application on the first computer; and

at least one storage device to store the software application.

12. The first computer of claim 11, wherein the at least one controller is responsive to a same single action by the first user to accept the link request and automatically launch the software application.

13. The first computer of claim 13, wherein the at least one controller, prior to launching the software application, automatically performs a check to ensure that the first and second computers have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon.

14. The first computer of claim 13, wherein the at least one controller, when it determines that the first and second computers do not have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon, automatically installs a new version of the software application on the first computer.

15. The first computer of claim 11, wherein the at least one controller includes:
means for receiving the link request at the first computer from the second computer; and
means, responsive to the first user accepting the link request, for automatically launching the software application on the first computer.

16. A method for launching a software application on a first computer, the first computer being coupled to a second computer, the method comprising acts of:

30 (A) receiving a link request at the first computer from the second computer, wherein the link request identifies a second user on the second computer, provides an icon identifying the software application and requests that a first user on the first

computer link with the second user to form a linked multi-user group that shares the software application; and

(B) selecting the icon to automatically launch the software application on the first computer.

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17. The method of claim 16, wherein the act (B) includes an act of selecting the icon and automatically launching the software application in response to only a single action by the first user.

10 18. The method of claim 16, further including an act of accepting the link request to form the linked multi-user group with the first and second users sharing the software application.

15 19. The method of claim 16, further including an act of, prior to the act of launching the software application, automatically performing a check to ensure that the first and second computers have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon.

20. The method of claim 19, further including an act of, when it is determined that the first and second computers do not have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon, automatically installing a new version of the software application on at least one of the first and second computers.

25 21. The method of claim 16, further including an act of accepting the link request to form the linked multi-user group with the first and second users sharing the software application, and wherein the acts selecting the icon to automatically launch the software application and accepting the link request are both performed in response to same single action by the first user.

30 22. A computer readable medium encoded with a computer program that, when executed on at least one computer, performs a method for launching a software application on a first computer, the first computer being coupled to a second computer, the method comprising acts of:

(A) receiving a link request at the first computer from the second computer, wherein the link request identifies a second user on the second computer, provides an icon identifying the software application and requests that a first user on the first computer link with the second user to form a linked multi-user group that shares the software application; and

(B) selecting the icon to automatically launch the software application on the first computer.

23. The computer readable medium of claim 22, wherein the act (B) includes an act of selecting the icon and automatically launching the software application in response to only a single action by the first user.

24. The computer readable medium of claim 22, wherein the method further includes an act of accepting the link request to form the linked multi-user group with the first and second users sharing the software application.

25. The computer readable medium of claim 22, wherein the method further includes an act of, prior to the act of launching the software application, automatically performing a check to ensure that the first and second computers have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon.

26. The computer readable medium of claim 25, wherein the method further includes an act of, when it is determined that the first and second computers do not have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon, automatically installing a new version of the software application on at least one of the first and second computers.

27. The computer readable medium of claim 22, wherein the method further includes an act of accepting the link request to form the linked multi-user group with the first and second users sharing the software application, and wherein the acts selecting the icon to automatically launch the software application and accepting the link request are both performed in response to same single action by the first user.

28. A first computer for use in a computer system that includes the first computer and a second computer coupled to the first computer, the first computer comprising:

at least one controller to receive a link request at the first computer from the second computer, the link request providing an icon identifying a software application,

5 the link request further identifying a second user on the second computer and requesting that a first user on the first computer link with the second user to form a linked multi-user group that shares the software application, wherein the at least one controller is responsive to the first user selecting the icon to automatically launch the software application on the first computer; and

10 at least one storage device to store the software application.

29. The first computer of claim 28, wherein the at least one controller is responsive to a same single action by the first user of selecting the icon to accept the link request and automatically launch the software application.

15 30. The first computer of claim 28, wherein the at least one controller, prior to launching the software application, automatically performs a check to ensure that the first and second computers have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon.

20 31. The first computer of claim 28, wherein the at least one controller, when it determines that the first and second computers do not have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon, automatically installs a new version of the software application on the first computer.

25 32. The first computer of claim 28, wherein the at least one controller includes:
means for receiving the link request at the first computer from the second computer; and

30 means, responsive to the first user selecting the icon, for automatically launching the software application on the first computer.

33. A method for facilitating launching of a software application on a first computer, the first computer being coupled to a second computer, the method comprising an act of:

(A) sending a link request from the second computer to the first computer, wherein the link request identifies a second user on the second computer and requests
5 that a first user on the first computer link with the second user to form a linked multi-user group that shares the software application, and wherein the link request includes a launch icon that, when selected by the first user, automatically launches the software application on the first computer.

10 34. The method of claim 33, wherein the act (A) includes an act of sending a link request including a launch icon that, when selected by the first user, automatically causes the first and second users to be linked in the linked multi-user group with the software application being shared by the first and second users.

15 35. The method of claim 33, wherein the act (A) includes an act of sending a link request that includes a link icon that, when selected by the first user, automatically causes the first and second users to be linked in the linked multi-user group.

20 36. The method of claim 33, wherein the act (A) includes an act of sending a link request including a launch icon that, when selected by the first user, causes a check to be performed to ensure that the first and second computers have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon.

25 37. The method of claim 33, wherein the act (A) includes an act of sending a link request including a launch icon that, when selected by the first user, causes a check to be performed to ensure that the first and second computers have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon, and when it is determined that the first and second computers do not have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon, automatically causes a new version of the software application to be installed on at least
30 one of the first and second computers.

38. A computer readable medium encoded with a computer program that, when executed on at least one computer, performs a method for facilitating launching of a software application on a first computer, the first computer being coupled to a second computer, the method comprising an act of:

5 (A) sending a link request from the second computer to the first computer, wherein the link request identifies a second user on the second computer and requests that a first user on the first computer link with the second user to form a linked multi-user group that shares the software application, and wherein the link request includes a launch icon that, when selected by the first user, automatically launches the software application on the first computer.

10 39. The computer readable medium of claim 38, wherein the act (A) includes an act of sending a link request including a launch icon that, when selected by the first user, automatically causes the first and second users to be linked in the linked multi-user

15 group with the software application being shared by the first and second users.

20 40. The computer readable medium of claim 38, wherein the act (A) includes an act of sending a link request that includes a link icon that, when selected by the first user, automatically causes the first and second users to be linked in the linked multi-user group.

25 41. The computer readable medium of claim 38, wherein the act (A) includes an act of sending a link request including a launch icon that, when selected by the first user, causes a check to be performed to ensure that the first and second computers have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon.

42. The computer readable medium of claim 38, wherein the act (A) includes an act of sending a link request including a launch icon that, when selected by the first user, causes a check to be performed to ensure that the first and second computers have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon, and when it is determined that the first and second computers do not have compatible versions of the

software application installed thereon, automatically causes a new version of the software application to be installed on at least one of the first and second computers.

43. A second computer for use in a computer system that includes a first computer
5 and the second computer coupled to the first computer, the second computer comprising:
at least one controller to send a link request from the second computer to the first computer, wherein the link request identifies a second user on the second computer and requests that a first user on the first computer link with the second user to form a linked multi-user group that shares a software application, and wherein the link request includes
10 a launch icon that, when selected by the first user, automatically launches the software application on the first computer; and
at least one storage device to store the software application.

44. The second computer of claim 43, wherein the at least one controller sends a link
15 request including a launch icon that, when selected by the first user, automatically causes the first and second users to be linked in the linked multi-user group with the software application being shared by the first and second users.

45. The second computer of claim 43, wherein the at least one controller sends a link
20 request that includes a link icon that, when selected by the first user, automatically causes the first and second users to be linked in the linked multi-user group.

46. The second computer of claim 43, wherein the at least one controller sends a link request including a launch icon that, when selected by the first user, causes a check to be
25 performed to ensure that the first and second computers have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon.

47. The second computer of claim 43, wherein the at least one controller sends a link request including a launch icon that, when selected by the first user, causes a check to be
30 performed to ensure that the first and second computers have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon, and when it is determined that the first and second computers do not have compatible versions of the software application installed thereon,

automatically causes a new version of the software application to be installed on at least one of the first and second computers.

48. The first computer of claim 43, wherein the at least one controller includes:

5 means for sending the link request from the second computer to the first computer.

49. A method for initiating formation of a linked multi-user group between a first user on a first computer and a second user on a second computer coupled to the first computer, the method comprising an act of:

(A) transmitting from the first computer to the second computer a link request to form the linked multi-user group so that the first and second users can share at least one software application.

15 50. The method of claim 49, wherein the act (A) includes an act of performing a single action on the first computer that results in the transmitting of the link request.

51. The method of claim 50, wherein the act (A) includes an act of displaying on the first computer a list of users accessible for linking with the first user in a linked multi-user group, and wherein the single act includes an act of selecting from the list an icon corresponding to the second user.

25 52. The method of claim 49, further including, prior to the act (A), an act of launching a first software application on the first computer, and wherein the act (A) includes an act of transmitting a link request to the second computer that identifies the first software application and requests to form a linked multi-user group between the first and second users wherein the first software application launched on the first computer is shared with a compatible software application launched on the second computer.

30 53. A computer readable medium encoded with a computer program that, when executed on at least one computer, performs a method for initiating formation of a linked

multi-user group between a first user on a first computer and a second user on a second computer coupled to the first computer, the method comprising an act of:

(A) transmitting from the first computer to the second computer a link request to form the linked multi-user group so that the first and second users can share at least one software application.

5 54. The computer readable medium of claim 53, wherein the act (A) includes an act of performing a single action on the first computer that results in the transmitting of the link request.

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55. The computer readable medium of claim 54, wherein the act (A) includes an act of displaying on the first computer a list of users accessible for linking with the first user in a linked multi-user group, and wherein the single act includes an act of selecting from the list an icon corresponding to the second user.

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56. The computer readable medium of claim 53, wherein the method further includes, prior to the act (A), an act of launching a first software application on the first computer, and wherein the act (A) includes an act of transmitting a link request to the second computer that identifies the first software application and requests to form a linked multi-user group between the first and second users wherein the first software application launched on the first computer is shared with a compatible software application launched on the second computer.

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57. A first computer for use in a computer system that includes the first computer and a second computer coupled to the first computer, the first computer comprising:

at least one controller to transmit from the first computer to the second computer a link request to form a linked multi-user group between a first user on the first computer and a second user on the second computer so that the first and second users can share at least one software application; and

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at least one storage device to store the at least one software application.

58. The first computer of claim 57, wherein the at least one controller transmits the link request in response to a single action performed by the first user.

59. The first computer of claim 58, wherein the at least one controller displays on the first computer a list of users accessible for linking with the first user in a linked multi-user group, and wherein the single action includes an act of selecting from the list an icon corresponding to the second user.

60. The first computer of claim 57, wherein the at least one controller, prior to transmitting the link request, launches a first software application on the first computer, and wherein the at least one controller transmits a link request to the second computer that identifies the first software application and requests to form a linked multi-user group between the first and second users wherein the first software application launched on the first computer is shared with a compatible software application launched on the second computer.

61. A method for completing formation of a linked multi-user group between a first user on a first computer and a second user on a second computer coupled to the first computer, the method comprising acts of:

20 (A) receiving, at the second computer, a link request transmitted from the first user requesting formation of a linked multi-user group between the first and second users so that the first and second users can share at least one software application; and
(B) accepting the link request at the second computer.

25 62. The method of claim 61, wherein the act (B) includes an act of performing a single action on the second computer that results in acceptance of the link request.

63. The method of claim 61, wherein the act (A) includes an act of receiving a link request that identifies at least one software application to be shared in the linked multi-user group.

64. The method of claim 61, wherein the act (B) includes an act of automatically forming the linked multi-user group in response to accepting the link request at the second computer.

5 65. A computer readable medium encoded with a computer program that, when executed on at least one computer, performs a method for completing formation of a linked multi-user group between a first user on a first computer and a second user on a second computer coupled to the first computer, the method comprising acts of:

10 (A) receiving, at the second computer, a link request transmitted from the first user requesting formation of a linked multi-user group between the first and second users so that the first and second users can share at least one software application; and

15 (B) accepting the link request at the second computer.

66. The computer readable medium of claim 65, wherein the act (B) includes an act 15 of performing a single action on the second computer that results in acceptance of the link request.

67. The computer readable medium of claim 65, wherein the act (A) includes an act 20 of receiving a link request that identifies at least one software application to be shared in the linked multi-user group.

68. The computer readable medium of claim 65, wherein the act (B) includes an act of automatically forming the linked multi-user group in response to accepting the link request at the second computer.

25 69. A second computer for use in a computer system that includes the second computer and a first computer coupled to the second computer, the second computer comprising:

30 at least one controller to receive and accept, at the second computer, a link request transmitted from a first user on the first computer requesting formation of a linked multi-user group between the first user and a second user on the second computer so that the first and second users can share at least one software application; and

at least one storage device to store the at least one software application.

70. The second computer of claim 69, wherein the at least one controller is responsive to a single action by the second user to accept the link request and complete formation of the linked multi-user group.

71. The second computer of claim 69, wherein the at least one controller receives a link request that identifies at least one software application to be shared in the linked multi-user group.

10 72. The second computer of claim 69, wherein the at least one controller automatically completes formation of the linked multi-user group in response to the second user accepting the link request at the second computer.

15 73. A method of adding an additional user to a linked multi-user group that includes at least first and second users that share at least one software application, the method comprising an act of:
(A) dynamically adding a third user to the linked multi-user group while maintaining the at least first and second users in continuous linked multi-user
20 communication.

74. The method of claim 73, wherein the act (A) includes an act of initiating the dynamic adding of the third user by transmitting a request from one of the at least first and second users to the third user inviting the third user to join the linked multi-user group.

25 75. The method of claim 73, wherein the act (A) includes an act of initiating the dynamic adding of the third user by transmitting a request from any of the at least first and second users to the third user inviting the third user to join the linked multi-user group, so that all of the at least first and second users are authorized to invite the third user to join the linked multi-user group.

76. The method of claim 73, further including an act of distributing information identifying each of the users in the linked multi-user group among each of the users in the linked multi-user group.

5 77. A computer readable medium encoded with a computer program that, when executed on at least one computer, performs a method for adding an additional user to a linked multi-user group that includes at least first and second users that share at least one software application, the method comprising an act of:

10 (A) dynamically adding a third user to the linked multi-user group while maintaining the at least first and second users in continuous linked multi-user communication.

15 78. The computer readable medium of claim 77, wherein the act (A) includes an act of initiating the dynamic adding of the third user by transmitting a request from one of the at least first and second users to the third user inviting the third user to join the linked multi-user group.

20 79. The computer readable medium of claim 77, wherein the act (A) includes an act of initiating the dynamic adding of the third user by transmitting a request from any of the at least first and second users to the third user inviting the third user to join the linked multi-user group, so that all of the at least first and second users are authorized to invite the third user to join the linked multi-user group.

80. The computer readable medium of claim 77, further including an act of 25 distributing information identifying each of the users in the linked multi-user group among each of the users in the linked multi-user group.

81. A first computer for use in a computer system that includes the first computer and a second computer coupled to the first computer, the first computer comprising: 30 at least one controller to dynamically add a third user to a linked multi-user group, previously formed between a first user on the first computer and a second user on the second computer so that the first and second users can share at least one software

application, while maintaining the at least first and second users in continuous linked multi-user communication; and

at least one storage device to store the at least one software application.

5 82. The first computer of claim 81, wherein the at least one controller initiates the dynamic adding of the third user by transmitting a request from the first user to the third user inviting the third user to join the linked multi-user group.

10 83. The first computer of claim 81, wherein the at least one controller distributes information identifying each of the users in the linked multi-user group among each of the users in the linked multi-user group.

15 84. A method for enabling a first software application on a first computer to be shared in a linked multi-user group with at least one other compatible software application on a second computer coupled to the first computer, wherein the first software application has a plug-in port to interface with software add-ons and has no capability coded therein for enabling its use in a linked multi-user group, the method comprising an act of:

20 (A) providing a software add-on that is compatible with the plug-in port and that enables the first software application to be shared in a linked multi-user group with at least one other compatible software application on the second computer.

25 85. A computer readable medium encoded with a computer program that, when executed on at least one computer, performs a method for enabling a first software application on a first computer to be shared in a linked multi-user group with at least one other compatible software application on a second computer coupled to the first computer, wherein the first software application has a plug-in port to interface with software add-ons and has no capability coded therein for enabling its use in a linked multi-user group, the computer program including a software add-on that is compatible 30 with the plug-in port, the method comprising an act of:

(A) interfacing the first software application with the at least one other compatible software application on the second computer to enable the first software

application to be shared in a linked multi-user group with the at least one other compatible software application.

86. A method of managing membership of a linked multi-user group of users that share at least one software application, the linked multi-user group including at least first and second users, the method comprising an act of:

(A) authorizing at least the first and second users to each add additional users to the linked multi-user group.

10 87. The method of claim 86, wherein the act (A) includes an act of authorizing any one of the users in the linked multi-user group to add additional users to the linked multi-user group.

15 88. The method of claim 86, wherein the act (A) includes an act of initiating the adding of an additional user to the linked multi-user group by transmitting a request from one of the at least first and second users to the additional user inviting the additional user to join the linked multi-user group.

20 89. The method of claim 86, further including an act of:

(B) preventing any of the users of the linked multi-user group from removing another user from the linked multi-user group.

90. A method of managing membership of a linked multi-user group of users that share at least one software application, the linked multi-user group including a plurality of linked users, the method comprising an act of:

(A) preventing any of the plurality of linked users from removing another of the plurality of linked users from the multi-user group.

30 91. A method for facilitating creation of a linked multi-user group of users that share software applications on a first computer with compatible software applications on a second computer, the method comprising acts of:

(A) providing a multi-user linking interface on the first computer, the multi-user linking interface providing a common interface to at least two software applications on the first computer and being compatible with an interface on the second computer to enable the multi-user linking interface on the first computer to be used in establishing a
5 linked multi-user group for the at least two software applications with compatible software applications on the second computer.

92. The method of claim 91, wherein the act (A) includes an act of providing a multi-user linking interface that maintains a same linked multi-user group for each of the at
10 least two software applications for which linked multi-user groups are formed through the multi-user linking interface.

93. The method of claim 91, wherein the act (A) includes an act of providing a multi-user linking interface that allows a user to make changes to a single list of users for a
15 linked multi-user group and have the changed list be applicable to each of the at least two software applications for which linked multi-user groups can be formed through the multi-user linking interface.

94. The method of claim 91, wherein the act (A) includes an act of providing a multi-user linking interface that displays to a user a list of the at least two software applications for which linked multi-user groups can be formed through the multi-user linking interface.
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95. The method of claim 91, wherein the act (A) includes an act of providing a multi-user linking interface that provides a user with an ability to launch, directly from the
25 multi-user linking interface, any of the at least two software applications for which linked multi-user groups can be formed through the multi-user linking interface.

96. The method of claim 95, wherein the act (A) includes an act of providing a multi-user linking interface that, when a user launches a software application directly from the
30 multi-user linking interface, automatically forms a linked multi-user group, for the software application, that includes a group of users specified via the multi-user linking

interface.

97. A computer readable medium encoded with a computer program that, when executed on at least one computer, performs a method for facilitating creation of a linked 5 multi-user group of users that share software applications on a first computer with compatible software applications on a second computer, the method comprising an act of:

(A) providing a multi-user linking interface on the first computer, the multi-user linking interface providing a common interface to at least two software applications 10 on the first computer and being compatible with an interface on the second computer to enable the multi-user linking interface on the first computer to be used in establishing a linked multi-user group for the at least two software applications with compatible software applications on the second computer.

15 98. The computer readable medium of claim 97, wherein the act (A) includes an act of providing a multi-user linking interface that maintains a same linked multi-user group for each of the at least two software applications for which linked multi-user groups are formed through the multi-user linking interface.

20 99. The computer readable medium of claim 97, wherein the act (A) includes an act of providing a multi-user linking interface that allows a user to make changes to a single list of users for a linked multi-user group and have the changed list be applicable to each of the at least two software applications for which linked multi-user groups can be formed through the multi-user linking interface.

25 100. The computer readable medium of claim 97, wherein the act (A) includes an act of providing a multi-user linking interface that displays to a user a list of the at least two software applications for which linked multi-user groups can be formed through the multi-user linking interface.

30 101. The computer readable medium of claim 97, wherein the act (A) includes an act of providing a multi-user linking interface that provides a user with an ability to launch,

directly from the multi-user linking interface, any of the at least two software applications for which linked multi-user groups can be formed through the multi-user linking interface.

5 102. The computer readable medium of claim 101, wherein the act (A) includes an act of providing a multi-user linking interface that, when a user launches a software application directly from the multi-user linking interface, automatically forms a linked multi-user group, for the software application, that includes a group of users specified via the multi-user linking interface.

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103. A first computer for use in a computer system that includes the first computer and a second computer coupled to the first computer, the first computer comprising:

at least one controller to provide a multi-user linking interface on the first computer, the multi-user linking interface providing a common interface to at least two

15 software applications on the first computer and being compatible with an interface on the second computer to enable the multi-user linking interface on the first computer to be used in establishing a linked multi-user group for the at least two software applications with compatible software applications on the second computer; and

20 at least one storage device to store the at least two software applications.

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104. The first computer of claim 103, wherein the at least one controller provides a multi-user linking interface that maintains a same linked multi-user group for each of the at least two software applications for which linked multi-user groups are formed through the multi-user linking interface.

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105. The first computer of claim 103, wherein the at least one controller provides a multi-user linking interface that allows a user to make changes to a single list of users for a linked multi-user group and have the changed list be applicable to each of the at least two software applications for which linked multi-user groups can be formed through the multi-user linking interface.

106. The first computer of claim 103, wherein the at least one controller provides a

multi-user linking interface that displays to a user a list of the at least two software applications for which linked multi-user groups can be formed through the multi-user linking interface.

- 5 107. The first computer of claim 103, wherein the at least one controller provides a multi-user linking interface that provides a user with an ability to launch, directly from the multi-user linking interface, any of the at least two software applications for which linked multi-user groups can be formed through the multi-user linking interface.
- 10 108. The first computer of claim 107, wherein the at least one controller provides a multi-user linking interface that, when a user launches a software application directly from the multi-user linking interface, automatically forms a linked multi-user group, for the software application, that includes a group of users specified via the multi-user linking interface.
- 15 109. A method for assisting a user in entering information into a computerized document via a software application executing on the user's computer, the method comprising acts of:
 - (A) creating a linked multi-user group between the user and a service representative so that the software application executing on the user's computer can be shared with a compatible software application executing on a computer used by the service representative;
 - (B) transmitting a copy of the computerized document from the user's computer to the computer used by the service representative so that the service representative and the user can enter information in the computerized document simultaneously.
- 20 110. The method of claim 109, wherein the computerized document is a web page and the software application is a web browser, and wherein the act (B) includes an act of transmitting a copy of the web page from the user's computer to the computer used by the service representative using peer-to-peer communication.

111. The method of claim 109, wherein the act (A) is performed in response to the user selecting an icon to request help from service personnel.

112. The method of claim 109, further including an act of establishing a second communication channel between the service representative and the user so that the user and the service representative can communicate via the linked multi-user group and the second communication channel simultaneously.

113. A computer readable medium encoded with a computer program that, when executed on at least one computer, performs a method for assisting a user in entering information into a computerized document via a software application executing on the user's computer, the method comprising acts of:

- (A) creating a linked multi-user group between the user and a service representative so that the software application executing on the user's computer can be shared with a compatible software application executing on a computer used by the service representative;
- (B) transmitting a copy of the computerized document from the user's computer to the computer used by the service representative so that the service representative and the user can enter information in the computerized document simultaneously.

114. The computer readable medium of claim 113, wherein the computerized document is a web page and the software application is a web browser, and wherein the act (B) includes an act of transmitting a copy of the web page from the user's computer to the computer used by the service representative.

115. The computer readable medium of claim 113, wherein the act (A) is performed in response to the user selecting an icon to request help from service personnel.

116. The computer readable medium of claim 113, wherein the method further includes an act of establishing a second communication channel between the service representative and the user so that the user and the service representative can

communicate via the linked multi-user group and the second communication channel simultaneously.

117. A first computer for use by a user in a computer system that further includes a
5 second computer used by a service representative, the first computer comprising:

at least one controller to create a linked multi-user group between the user and the service representative so that a software application executing on the user's computer can be shared with a compatible software application executing on the second computer used by the service representative, the at least one controller to further transmit a copy of

10 a computerized document from the first computer to the second computer so that the service representative and the user can enter information in the computerized document simultaneously; and

at least one storage device to store the software application.

15 118. The first computer of claim 117, wherein the computerized document is a web page and the software application is a web browser, and wherein the at least one controller transmits a copy of the web page from the first computer to the second computer.

20 119. The first computer of claim 117, wherein the at least one controller creates the linked multi-user group in response to the user selecting an icon to request help from service personnel.

120. A method for enabling shared access to a web page between a first user on a first
25 computer and a second user on a second computer, the method comprising acts of:

(A) creating a linked multi-user group between the first and second users to enable a first web browser executing on the first computer to be shared with a compatible second web browser executing on the second computer; and

30 (B) transmitting a copy of at least a portion of the web page from the first web browser to the second web browser.

121. The method of claim 120, further including acts of:

(C) maintaining coherency between the copies of the web pages on the first and second web browsers by transferring information between the first and second web browsers via the linked multi-user group.

5 122. The method of claim 120, wherein the act (B) includes an act of transmitting less than the entire web page from the first web browser to the second web browser.

10 123. The method of claim 121, wherein the act (C) includes an act of, when the first user updates a copy of the web page on the first web browser, transferring only the updated portion of the web page to the second web browser.

15 124. A computer readable medium encoded with a computer program that, when executed on at least one computer, performs a method for enabling shared access to a web page between a first user on a first computer and a second user on a second computer, the method comprising acts of:

(A) creating a linked multi-user group between the first and second users to enable a first web browser executing on the first computer to be shared with a compatible second web browser executing on the second computer; and

20 (B) transmitting a copy of at least a portion of the web page from the first web browser to the second web browser.

125. The computer readable medium of claim 124, wherein the method further includes acts of:

25 (C) maintaining coherency between the copies of the web pages on the first and second web browsers by transferring information between the first and second web browsers via the linked multi-user group.

126. The computer readable medium of claim 124, wherein the act (B) includes an act of transmitting less than the entire web page from the first web browser to the second web browser.

127. The computer readable medium of claim 125, wherein the act (C) includes an act of, when the first user updates a copy of the web page on the first web browser, transferring only the updated portion of the web page to the second web browser.

5 128. A first computer for use by a user in a computer system that the first computer and a second computer coupled to the first computer, the first computer comprising:

at least one controller to create a linked multi-user group, between a first user on the first computer and a second user on the second computer, that enables a first web browser executing on the first computer to be shared with a compatible second web

10 browser executing on the second computer, the at least one controller to further transmit a copy of at least a portion of a web page from the first web browser to the second web browser to enable the first and second users to share the at least a portion of the web page; and

15 · at least one storage device to store the first web browser.

129. The first computer of claim 128, wherein the at least one controller maintains coherency between the copies of the web pages on the first and second web browsers by transferring information between the first and second web browsers via the linked multi-user group.

20 130. The first computer of claim 128, wherein the at least one controller, responsive to the first user updating a copy of the web page on the first web browser, transfers only the updated portion of the web page to the second web browser.

25 131. The first computer of claim 128, wherein the at least one controller includes:
means for creating a linked multi-user group, between a first user on the first computer and a second user on the second computer, that enables a first web browser executing on the first computer to be shared with a compatible second web browser executing on the second computer; and

30 means for transmitting a copy of at least a portion of a web page from the first web browser to the second web browser to enable the first and second users to share the at least a portion of the web page.

132. The method of claim 1, wherein the act (A) includes an act of receiving the link request in a peer-to-peer communication.

133. The method of claim 1, further including an act of forming the linked multi-user group and sharing the software application using peer-to-peer communication.

134. The method of claim 49, wherein the act (A) includes an act of transmitting the link request in a peer-to-peer communication.

135. The method of claim 49, further including an act of forming the linked multi-user group and sharing the at least one software application using peer-to-peer communication.

136. The method of claim 73, wherein the act (A) includes an act of dynamically adding the third user using peer-to-peer communication.

137. The method of claim 73, further including an act of maintaining the at least first and second users in continuous peer-to-peer linked multi-user communication.

138. The method of claim 84, wherein the act (A) includes an act of providing a software add-on that communicates with the at least one other compatible software application using peer-to-peer communication.

139. The method of claim 120, wherein the act (B) includes an act of transmitting the copy of the at least a portion of the web page using peer-to-peer communication.

140. A method of updating a first pointer on a first computer executing a first software application that is shared with a second software application executing on a second computer, the first pointer representing a position of a second pointer on the second computer, the method comprising an act of:

(A) in response to a user moving the second cursor on the second computer, transmitting information from the second computer to the first computer that enables the first computer to predict future positioning of the second cursor.

5 141. A method of updating a first pointer on a first computer executing a first software application that is shared with a second software application executing on a second computer, the first pointer representing a position of a second pointer on the second computer, the method comprising an act of:

10 (A) receiving, at the first computer, information relating to movement of the second cursor; and

(B) predicting future movement of the first cursor based on the information.

142. A method of updating a first pointer on a first computer executing a first software application that is shared with a second software application executing on a second computer, the first pointer representing a position of a second pointer on the second computer, the first software application having a first document associated therewith, the second software application having a second document associated therewith, wherein one of the first and second documents includes only a subset of the information in the other, the method comprising an act of:

20 (A) in response to a user moving the second cursor on the second computer, transmitting information from the second computer to the first computer that defines a position of the second cursor relative to a landmark in the second document that is also in the first document.

25 143. A method of updating a first pointer on a first computer executing a first software application that is shared with a second software application executing on a second computer, the first pointer representing a position of a second pointer on the second computer, the first software application having a first document associated therewith, the second software application having a second document associated therewith, wherein 30 one of the first and second documents includes only a subset of the information in the other, the method comprising an act of:

(A) receiving, at the first computer, information from the second computer that defines a position of the second cursor relative to a landmark in the second document that is also in the first document; and

(B) updating a position of the first cursor based on the information.

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144. A method for use in a computer system including first and second computers that are coupled together and share a software application, the method comprising an act of:

(A) displaying, on a display of the first computer, first and second pointers, wherein a position of the first pointer is controlled by a user of the first computer and 10 wherein a position of the second pointer is controlled by a user of the second computer.

145. The method of claim 144, further including an act of receiving, at the first computer, in a peer-to-peer communication, information relating to the position of the second pointer.

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